DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 813 FL 014 642

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TITLE The Missing Link in ESL Teacher Training.
PUB DATE Aug 84
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT MEXTESOL Journal; v8 n2 p49-62 Aug 1984

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Dramatics; *English (Second Language); Graduation Requirements; *Language Teachers; Nonverbal Communication; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Second Language Instruction; Success; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

Many sincere, well-prepared, and technically qualified teachers of English as a second language (ESL) are awkward in class, stressed, and insecure, showing little excitement or energy. The missing element in training programs for ESL teachers is a good basic course in drama. It is an expression at both the visual and auditory levels, is a medium of communication and interpretation, and engages students in both verbal and nonverbal learning. The study of the place of personality in second language acquisition supports the idea that development of teacher personality through drama will improve classroom teaching. A three-credit course integral to and required in ESL teacher training programs would have as its objective to develop the teacher's personality to become a more effective instrument in the classroom. Such a course would focus on movement, voice, scene study, and expertise in using English Through Drama exercises. It would expose teachers to a wide range of communication techniques for different learning styles, would raise teacher energy and self-confidence levels, and would bring out hidden teacher talents. Criticism of this kind of course is to be anticipated, but it can be argued that a teacher's demeanor, tone of voice, and personality are as important to his teaching success as technical preparation. (MSE)

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Mextesol Journal
Vol 8 No 2 August 1984

ED249813

THE MISSING LINK IN ESL TEACHER TRAINING

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Effectivity of Teacher Training

Mason (1982: 23-28) writing on the three key areas of accountability for Teachers of English as a Second Language, enlarged on what Orem (1981: 1-3) had written in a previous issue of the same publication. Both writers were treating the ever-present concern of making TESOL programs more effective. One area of the discussion touched on the training and preparation of the ESL teacher as an important factor for success. Orem, in his article, states that the ESL teacher is most probably the single most important variable in the classroom affecting student achievement. I would omit the "most probably."

Mason points out that candidates for an M.A. or Certificate Program in ESL spend all or nearly all of their time absorbing theory and far too little demonstrating that they know how to give that theory practical application. Wallace (151-157) puts it a bit more strongly when he states that the most common criticism of teacher training courses is that they are too theoretical or in some other way irrelevant to the needs of the teacher in the classroom, and that courses in ESL are often subject to the same criticism.

Even more disturbing are teacher training programs conducted in foreign countries where much time is given to teaching high-powered courses in linguistics and sophisticated methodologies that are impractical for the situation, when the great need and desire of those teachers is to improve their English in the basics,

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such as pronunciation, and especially in speaking the language. I experienced this in Korea in 1982 where I worked with 300 middle and high school teachers of English. And those Korean teachers were very frank in stating what they needed and what they did not need.

In observing practice teachers in ESL and those who have finished their degrees, I have found them technically prepared with courses in linguistics with all its ramifications. They have been brought into contact with all the different methodologies such as the silent way, community language learning, suggestopoedia and the total physical response.

These teachers are for the most part desirous of being successful and giving the students quality instruction. And they have evidently prepared their individual classes well. And yet far too many ESL classes fail. It could be pointed out by the observer that this or that particular aspect of the class needs to be done better, i.e., boardwork, clearer explanations of certain points of grammar, one simple objective per class, etc. But these observations do not constitute the root cause of failure. There is something much deeper. The teacher is timid and the voice has little variation and stress and little interest is conveyed. Movements are awkward, as are the gestures, if there are any. The total picture is of a teacher under stress, fearful, insecure, not in control of self and with little interest, excitement and energy. The class lacks life and challenge! All this is conveyed to the students who react accordingly. Are these exaggerations or exceptions? We grant that even in the best of human endeavors there will be off days. Because of personal problems or situations teachers are not at their best for every class. But the failures happen too often, and too many students are disillusioned. In short, as Mason concludes, they are not getting the satisfaction of a paying customer.

Focusing on the Problem

I have asked myself these questions many times: "Why has this sincere and technically prepared teacher failed?" "Where do we fail in our teacher training programs?" It obviously is not in the technical preparation,but rather one dimension has been neglected which would be placed in Mason's box labelled "desireable personal qualities."

After much thought and examination of ESL curricula of institutions that award ESL degrees and certificates, I have come to the conclusion that the missing element is a good basic course in the fundamentals of drama for the ESL teacher. This conviction has deepened after every one of the many workshops for teachers that I have given in English Through Drama. Here however, I am opting for this component as a required and integral part of the programs for ESL candidates.

Immediately I hear the cries: "Absurd!" "What has drama to do with ESL?" "There is no room for another course in the programs!" And other objections which I will discuss later.

After noting salutary steps in the right direction in recent times in the ESL profession, Mason states that only the effective teacher, working under optimum conditions, can ultimately guarantee student motivation and learning in English. Optimum conditions, devoutly to be wished for, are realized in comparatively few situations. However, we can at least work to increase the effectivity of the teacher by taking a radical step forward.

Educators who are not familiar with the educational values of drama training are quick to discredit it and cast it to the limbo of extracurricular activity. Unfortunately, the less they know about drama the more certain they seem to be that it is a total waste of time or a source of recreation and nothing more. Drama has been

kicked around in the course of our century, sometimes offered as an elective or as an extracurricular activity. As an academic discipline it has little in common with the notion that drama is merely an activity in which students can work off excess energy or be some sort of substitute for sports.

Unique in drama discipline is the fact that it is an expression at both the visual and the auditory levels. Drama, along with literature, art, music and speech, is a medium of interpretation and a means of communication. (Isn't communication the name of the game in ESL?) But unlike some of the other disciplines, the communication and the interpretation call for facial expression, pantomime movement, the skilled use of the voice and the intelligent use of the spoken word. In addition, it is a discipline that engages the student in both verbal and nonverbal learning. It is a discipline that trains the mind, body and spirit.

If the education of the whole personality (the training of mind, body and spirit) is the objective of modern education, as we are told it is, then we should look at our degree programs to see if all three elements are being trained from the standpoint of future teachers of a second language.

Without wanting it,I am being dragged into the controversy of the cognitive versus the affective. Brown (1980: 100) wrote the following:

> If we were to devise theories of second language acquisition or teaching methods which were based only on cognitive considerations, we would be omitting the most fundamental side of human behavior. Nearly two decades ago Ernest Hilgard, well known for his study of human learning and cognition, noted "purely cognitive theories of learning will be rejected unless a role is assigned to affectivity" (1963: 267). In recent years there has been

an increasing awareness of the necessity in second language research and teaching to examine human personality.

It would be foolish to insist on the cognitive at the expense of the affective or vice versa. We know that man has a mind and feelings and those faculties do not operate separately. However, we do not find the development of personality with due emphasis on the affective treated in programs to prepare teachers for ESL.

Developing Teacher Personality

The study of the place personality plays in second language acquisition has led to a greater understanding of the language learning process and to improved teaching methods, and developing personality involves the growth of a person's "concept of self, acceptance of self, and reflections of self as seen in the interaction between self and others" (Brown 1980: 103). If this is true of the acquisition of a second language it should be more so for the teaching of a second language.

Since the term personality is being used here so frequently, perhaps it would be helpful to clarify the meaning of the term. Personality is the habitual patterns and qualities of behavior of any individual as expressed by physical and mental activities and attitudes; the distinctive individual qualities of a person, considered collectively.

Way (1967: 14) lists essential factors (resources) of personality: 1) the use of the five major senses; 2) imagination; 3) the use, mastery and control of physical self; 4) speech or practice at talking; 5) the discovery and control of emotion and 6) the intellect. The last can be eliminated in our discussion as we have indicated that it is more than adequately provided for in the curriculum of the degree programs.

If we reflect then on the above, we find many facts of

personality or resources of the person common to all humans with potential for development. So we are not talking of new and artificial factors to be imposed. It is matter of helping each individual discover, explore and draw out his or her own resources. Way rightly points out that drama includes the discovery and exploration of one's environment, and within that environment are seen to exist many other people towards whom one begins to feel a growing sensitivity through each of the basic personal resources.

If the language is the individual's major means of communication, the teaching of a language (spoken or gestural) should be such that a sound basis for positive communication is generated. This means that the teaching should involve far more than the facilitation of motor and verbal skills. To achieve teaching of the finest sort, the development of the teacher's personality is of significance. Basic drama training would constitute the first step towards more profound language comprehension and command of the written and spoken word.

The idea of incorporating a course in drama in the training of language teachers comes after analyzing what it is in an actor's training that we can transfer to people in various professions that can bring them to develop their own personal skills such as presence, body awareness and their potential as people with natural gifts and, with this in mind, which kind of exercises a person such as a teacher can lead and teach others with the training that he/she has been given.

When we speak of teachers we are talking about a group which, with a few exceptions, has never had a drama exercise in their lives. They have gone through a teacher certificate or degree program - standard training to teach others. Unfortunately, this classical training does not give sufficient attention to the fact that these teachers are going to have to communicate with others in an effective way. If a person exposes self to a certain training in the fundamentals of acting, the effects will be felt in the teaching. At the end of such a training teachers will be different people with more developed voices,

an awareness for movement, and most important, a real confidence in themselves as teachers.

Teachers normally use their voices and blackboards to convey information about the subject they are teaching, but for many students, particularly foreign ones, the information simply does not get across. There seems to be a break in transmission. Actors are also engaged in communication; they have to get their material across to an audience. In the process, they learn to use their voices, handle their bodies and interpret texts.

Just as Hamlet could not bear bad actors, students cannot bear bad teachers who think they are teaching when they go through the motions in class of speaking, reading and writing without imbuing the words with drama, humor or emotions.

Drama in the Curriculum

I, therefore, opt for a required three-credit course in the fundamentals of drama. The goal of this course would not be the development of actors nor the production of plays. It would aim to develop the personality of the teacher to become a more effective instrument. In addition, the participants would be trained in giving the exercises for teaching English Through Drama.

The teachers in the course would work to enrich their capacity to analyze and integrate the individual needs of their students with the needs of the total classroom group. Ideally, students' needs and the group needs should be related to the social context in which the educational process takes place. Such work would aim at the development in teachers of emotional and intellectual balance and a capacity for acute insight.

What has been proposed here is in itself an expression of contemporary education developments and research. Many experts today (in therapeutic as well as educational fields) see in drama a significant key to the development of positive social relations and

of individual insight and personal growth. The course then would focus on these areas: movement, voice, scene study and expertise in using the exercises of English Through Drama.

Movement is to instill physical confidence and grace and, most important, perhaps a quality of body control and relaxation which contributes much towards effective communication.

Voice work would be aimed at extending the voice range and enriching vocal timbre and nuance - qualities of importance to the teacher. Barry Coghlan (1980),member of the staff at the Roy Hart Theatre in France, internationally famous for its work with the voice, highlights the importance of the voice:

> Most teachers don't know how to use their voice at all. They only use their voices to tell the students things or even to scream at them. By learning what we can do with our voices, we are also learning how to get information across. Working with the voice, you have to work with your body and your intelligence. The voice tells more of the truth than any other expression that I know of in our humanity. Hence the work we do is following the lead which is taken by human relationships. Our work is the development of the voice. Our aim is not theatre but to explore the human voice and to see how far it can take us. It happens to be theatre but we are not aiming to be theatrical. When you work like this you get quite a lot of concentration.

Coghlan's remark on concentration recalls to mind that the great Stanislavski pointed out that an actor's concentration embraces his will, emotions, mind, memory, body and imagination.

The third area of attention in the course would be text or scene study which introduces the teacher to systematic methods of using texts in ways which make the classroom a center for dynamic learning. The aim is to generate free creative work within the group which is rooted in the textual material and in the needs of

individuals, the group and,ultimately,the broader society. This work has shown that this facet of drama stimulates individual growth and comprehension in the teacher.

The final component of the program, the learning of the English Through Drama exercises for use in the classroom, need not be entered into here.

The benefits from such a course to the teacher can be divided into two areas: personal and educational. The teacher will find out more about who she/he is. This kind of training brings out hidden talents as well as hidden inhibitions. The teacher gets a clearer definition of self and of the range of abilities she/he is bringing to the classroom.

Educationally, the teacher is exposed to a whole spectrum of ways to communicate with the students and ways to help them communicate with each other. There are methods for kinesthetic learners, visual learners and auditory learners. The use of drama, movement, voice and mask hits all three kinds of learners at the same time. The teacher gains a whole new set of tools to communicate with and is encouraged to think and plan classes with a completely different sense of dynamic. Once the teacher has experienced the thrill of a class alive and interested, there should be fewer classes characterized as, "mechanized, routine, over-ritualized, dull, boring. There will be fewer robotized teachers" (Brown 1975: 117).

Much would be done in such a course to raise the level of energy in the teacher, for the energy level that is required for a language teacher is a very different kind of energy than that which is used in a standard classroom session. In this type of class personal development is paramcunt. Great effort is made to give the teacher self-confidence. They can succeed and they can fail in a very safe secure atmosphere. Finally, the teacher can walk into a classroom and introduce the lesson with confidence and security.

Answering Some Objections

The idea of making a course in fundamentals of drama a requirement for an MA or Teaching Certificate for ESL will raise eyebrows and maybe even bring contemptuous dismissal. Various objections will be raised. Perhaps it will be pointed out that what has been advocated here is taken care of in other courses in education; i.e., the study of literature, educational psychology, methods courses, etc. It will be alleged that this is nothing but high jinks and a waste of time. However, no one can deny that the problem is with us. What solution is offered? To deny the problem exists, or to pass it over, means that anyone making such a statement either has not visited teachers in class or has not talked to students. And frequently the professional who voices these objections is the one who gives a paper at a conference, cannot be understood, and is "deadly." Frequently this critic is the one who teaches a dead, boring ineffective class that is essential for the degree program, and the teacher candidates are captive audiences who have no choice but to suffer through the classes.

In the last few years there has been a renewed interest in the use of drama in the teaching of a second language. It is time that it be used to train the teachers to be more effective. To close eyes and ears to the testimony of teachers who have seen the positive results of this kind of training in their work as teachers and in the students learning the second language would be shortsighted indeed. It constitutes the kind of tunnel vision that can only hold back progress in the ESL professional field.

This is the mentality that refuses to be alerted by the research conducted at Florida State University (Wing 1975) which suggests that effective teachers are characterized:

> not by particular methods and demonstrated competencies, but rather by: 1) knowledge of the subject area; 2) sensi-

tivity and capacity to empathize; 3) accurate and appropriate beliefs about people and their behavior; 4) positive self-image; 5) appropriate beliefs about goals and purpose of society, schools, and classroom and a clear philosophy of teaching; and 6) personal discovery of one's own appropriate and authentic ways of teaching.

It would be strange indeed if we found social workers, psychologists, business persons and others who dealt with people turning to drama for training and teachers of language disdaining its proven values. A professor in a law school in San Francisco starts his class with acting exercises to help students overcome self-consciousness and learn about non-verbal signals. Certainly the need for the development of personality, confidence, effective use of voice, gestures, movement are just as important or more so for the teacher of languages as for a lawyer, a business person or a social worker.

It is important to emphasize that we are not talking of high jinks. We are not advocating faking some kind of theatrics. Nor are we making claims for any miracle-working (Koster 1980: 42-43). Carlson (1982: 22-24) rightly warns of the excessive use of pretending. But the way a teacher walks, his tone of voice, what his vocabulary is and other factors of personality are crucial for success along with the courses in linguistics, sociolinguistics, generative semantics, etc.

"It is not academic." How the experts love to throw that one around! What do they mean by "academic"? It should not be necessary to point out that if the education of the whole person (mind, body and spirit) is the objective of modern education, then that objective is not without good precedent when we remember the Greeks. Such an objective for them resulted in the creation of unforgettable oratory, drama, poetry, political and philosophical treatises, and such accomplishments as the Olympics, great sculpture, painting, music and dance. And then there was Aristotle,

the greatest teacher of his time. He hailed drama as highly significant in the finest culture men had achieved. His Poetics was all about the values of drama in the education of the whole person.

Penfield (97) proclaims that the potential of drama in language teaching has long been recognized. Dramatization has no peers as an activity for practicing a foreign language (Huebner 1967). It is to be regretted that this potential is not exploited enough in teaching ESL. I regret that this potential has not been exploited in the preparation of teachers to teach a second language.

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